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Internet Explorer History

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In the early 90s—the dawn of history as far as the World Wide Web is concerned—relatively few users were communicating across this global network. They used an assortment of shareware and other software for Microsoft Windows® operating system.

In 1995, Microsoft hosted an Internet Strategy Day and announced its commitment to adding Internet capabilities to all its products. In fulfillment of that announcement, Microsoft Internet Explorer arrived as both a graphical Web browser and the name for a set of technologies.

1995: Internet Explorer 1.0

In July 1995, Microsoft released the Windows 95 operating system, which included built-in support for dial-up networking and TCP/IP (Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol), key technologies for connecting to the Internet. In response to the growing public interest in the Internet, Microsoft created an add-on to the operating system called Internet Explorer 1.0. When Windows 95 with Internet Explorer debuted, the Internet became much more accessible for many more people.

Internet Explorer technology originally shipped as the Internet Jumpstart Kit in Microsoft Plus! For Windows 95. Internet Explorer replaced the need for cumbersome, manual installation steps required by many of the existing shareware browsers.

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1995: Internet Explorer 2.0

In November 1995, Microsoft released its first cross-platform browser, Internet Explorer 2.0, which supported both Macintosh and 32-bit

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Windows users.

With Internet Explorer 2.0 came a new set of fledgling Internet technologies that offered Web developers and designers the power to design secure, media-rich Web sites with tracking capabilities. Internet Explorer 2.0 technology introduced Secure Socket Layer (SSL) protocol as well as support for HTTP cookies, Virtual Reality Modeling Language (VRML), and Internet newsgroups.

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1996: Internet Explorer 3.0

In August 1996, Microsoft released its completely rebuilt Internet Explorer technology, which included features that were revolutionary for the time. Designed for Windows 95, Internet Explorer 3.0 technology offered useful components that immediately appealed to users, including Internet Mail and News 1.0 and Windows Address Book. Later, Microsoft NetMeeting® and Windows Media Player were added. Now the Internet Explorer browser could display GIF and JPG files, play MIDI sound files, and play streaming audio files without the assistance of helper applications.

For Web developers, Internet Explorer 3.0 technology delivered a flexible programming model with a choice of scripting languages. Web designers also received more predictable results, thanks to Cascading Style Sheets (CSS). Moreoever, Internet Explorer 3.0 was designed to allow Web developers to extend it easily at a time when Internet standards were quickly evolving.

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1997: Internet Explorer 4.0

Designed for Windows 95, Windows 98, and Windows NT®, Internet Explorer 4.0 technology was a significant move forward. For Web developers, the addition of Dynamic HTML (DHTML) heralded the next step in Web design. DHTML gave Web developers more control over content and style and created opportunities that previously had been possible only with software applications.

Suddenly Web pages became much more interactive—users could expand menus with a click or drag images and objects around. The Web started to look more like the applications and games that people were accustomed to and less like a static series of pages.

With Internet Explorer 4.0, Microsoft Outlook®

Express 4.0 was also installed for the first time as an upgrade to Internet Mail and News. This built-in component improved the way users sent, received, and organized their e-mail and address book.

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1998: Internet Explorer 5.0

With the September 1998 release of Internet Explorer 5.0 technology, developers gained the ability to design richer Web applications. DHTML capabilities were expanded, giving Web developers more flexibility and power to create interactive Web sites.

Now personalization became a key focus as Web applications based on DHTML emerged. Users encountered rich applications on the Web—for example, an expense report could automatically configure itself based on a user's personalized settings. With expanded programming capabilities such as these, Internet Explorer 5.0 technologies helped usher in a new era of e-commerce.

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2001: Internet Explorer 6

Internet Explorer 6 technology was released with Windows XP in 2001 as a more private, reliable, and flexible technology than previous versions. Because privacy and security had become customer priorities, Microsoft implemented tools that support Platform for Privacy Preferences (P3P), a technology under development by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C).

From the home user simply browsing content on the Web, to the IT administrator deploying and maintaining a rich set of Windows Internet technologies, to the Web developer creating rich Web content, Internet Explorer 6 technologies provide the freedom to experience the best of the Internet.

For more information, see the Internet Explorer Web site.

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